

Al Farouq

The Criterion

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CLARIFICATION ON THE SAUDI EID CELEBRATION

Recent news reports have created unnecessary hype about the decision of Saudi Arabia to have Eid on Tuesday 30 August, after 29 days of Ramadaan. Some reports, like that of the UK Guardian, made the ridiculous claim that the planet Saturn was mistaken for the moon by viewers in Saudi, while other internet reports created a huge hoax by announcing that the Saudi Government was going to pay billions of Riyals as compensation for missing one fast due to the incorrect decision. All of these false and baseless claims were either instigated or perpetuated by the anti-Saudi lobbies, both among Muslims and non-Muslims in different parts of the world. In fact, these mischief-mongers had a field day touting all these spurious claims and blatant lies against the Saudi government. While we, too, have differences with the Saudis on several issues including their methods of moon-sighting, it is important to maintain impartiality in these matters and place the Shariah first. On this occasion, it is our view that the way the Saudi government went about establishing the sighting of the Eid

moon and its subsequent announcement was fully in conformity to Shariah and totally acceptable.

One of the arguments against the acceptance of the Saudi Eid announcement was that scientifically the moon is not visible 12 hours after its birth. However, this argument is baseless because Shar'ee methods are not subject to astronomical calculations. It is precisely for this reason that there erupted a local controversy too, when a prominent national organization made the premature announcement of Eid being held after 30 days of fasting even before attempting to sight the moon, a move that was totally irresponsible and contrary to Shariah. The Hadith of Our Rasool (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) is quite clear: "Sight the moon after 29 days; if the crescent is not seen, complete Ramadaan as 30 days."

From our correspondent in Madinah we have learnt that the moon was sighted with the naked eye on Monday night in outlying villages in Saudi Arabia. The witnesses to this sighting went through the normal procedure of scrutiny and verification, and their testimony was thus ratified by the Shar'ee

court. Once this procedure was done, the official announcement for Eid to be held on Tuesday was made. In terms of Shariah, this procedure is totally acceptable. All the Ulema of Saudi accepted this decision and all celebrated Eid on Tuesday 30 August. None of the Ulema in Saudi later contested this information, nor was there any announcement for people to fill in one fast as qadha. Hence, any report to this effect is blatantly false. It is, therefore, not necessary for those who fasted 29 days in Saudi Arabia to keep qadha. Their Ramadaan was complete. Likewise those who observed I'tikaaf in the Haramayn must regard their I'tikaaf as complete and valid. Similarly, people who fasted in the surrounding areas and accepted the Saudi sighting, such as Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, etc. shall not have to keep qadha of any fast.

It is also a rule of Fiqah that in an Islamic country the official announcement for Eid and Hajj by the Muslim government is acceptable and binding on all Muslims living in that country, regardless of how such a decision was reached.

And Allah Ta'ala knows best